



WHAT WE HEARD SPRING 2024

Buffalo Trail Public Schools



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History

During the 2022-2023 school year, Buffalo Trail Public Schools (BTPS) engaged over 500 stakeholders between November 2022 and February 2023. The Board of Trustees and division leadership are committed to accountability and value the time that students, parents, guardians, staff and community members took to share their hopes and dreams for BTPS. This input helped shape BTPS' priorities, outcomes and strategies through the 2026-2027 school year.

The engagement process focused on gathering input and ideas to inform possible ways forward. The aim for these engagements were for the Board of Trustees and division leadership to hear what priorities and goals stakeholders held for BTPS schools. Over the course of multiple sessions--in person and online--the following questions were posed:

- “What do you hope BTPS will achieve in four years?”
- “What do you want BTPS to stop, start or continue over the next four years?”

Many themes repeated, including the strong pride students, parents, guardians, staff and community members feel for their rural connections and communities. Along with a variety of data from past Annual Evaluation Results Reports, budgets and research analytics, the feedback from stakeholders informed [BTPS' 2023-2027 Education Plan](#).

Stakeholders shaped the three Education Plan priorities including:

1. Supporting Learning Success for All Student
2. Fostering Safe and Caring Learning Environment
3. Building Strong Collaborations

Process

After the completion of the [BTPS' 2023-2027 Education Plan](#), evidence was gathered from schools across BTPS to provide assurance on each of these priorities. This evidence is compiled and shared yearly with stakeholders as part of our [Annual Education Results Report](#). BTPS also tracks and shares our results publicly for the division and each school on our [Assurance Dashboard](#).

As part of the stakeholder engagement process, Board-student engagements are held monthly. Students from every school across the division are asked questions related to the Education Plan priorities and share these responses with the Board.

In February of 2024, four online stakeholder engagement sessions were held for staff, parents and community members. Results from the previous year were shared along with questions to provide direction for the division in the 2024-2025 school year.

These questions focused on:

- What are some of the strengths of BTPS?
- What are some of the challenges affecting BTPS schools?
- What do we need to continue to do in our BTPS Schools?
- What domain areas should BTPS focus on for the coming school year?

February Stakeholder Engagement Responses

The online engagement survey had almost 400 responses including 204 staff, 157 students, and 31 parents. Respondents to the survey were asked to identify a school they most closely are affiliated with and it was notable that every school was identified. As we look at different stakeholders the major themes for strengths, challenges and actions to continue were similar.

Strengths of BTPS

What We Heard about Strengths

“Friendly teachers and offers various special programs” Parent

“Kids are welcomed and feel safe” Parent

“Small school environment where great teachers know every child really well” Parent

“Dedicated staff, strong community ties, parental support” Staff

“Warm; small; inviting; working closely with their community to make them feel part of our efforts”
Staff

“Friendly community, helpful staff and good staff, clean halls and classrooms, option classes” Student

“Everyone is nice, considerate and caring and it is a good learning environment” Student

Themes of the Strengths of BTPS.

1. Community Support and Engagement

- Great communication and small-town support
- Small school environment with involved parents and teachers
- School and community partnership
- Involvement and support from parents
- Community-oriented approach
- Engagement opportunities with other schools and communities
- Affiliations with Lakeland College and innovative programs
- Principal collaborating with School Council

2. Caring and Supportive Environment

- Staff commitment to the growth and success of students
- Staff building caring relationships with students and families
- Students are welcomed and feel safe
- Opportunities for parent engagement and creating a safe learning environment

3. Quality Teachers and Staff

- Caring and involved teachers and staff

- Good relationships with teachers, open to communication
- Supportive staff

4. Access to Supports

- Accessible mental health support
- Support systems for students
- Providing outside supports for children with needs
- Community-oriented approach

Statements unique to stakeholder groups

Parents

- Parents identified a commitment to engaging parents, students and staff.

Staff

- Staff identified strong professional opportunities and collaboration between staff members and schools.

Students

- Students identified athletics and sports teams as a strength of BTPS.

Challenges

What We Heard about Challenges

“Attracting students and good staff to rural schools. Lack of educational Options in rural schools” Parent

“Lack of student enrollment which leads to lack of funding and limits the courses that can be offered and the number of staff” Parent

“Declining numbers in some of the schools” Staff

“Creating a space for more fine arts / options for junior high” Staff

“With enrollments dropping, it is getting more challenging to meet the diverse needs of our students with the limited resources available” Staff

“The schools are rural so they don't get enough money” Student

“Some programs aren't available past a certain level i.e. computer science” Student

Themes of challenges affecting BTPS schools.

1. Funding, Enrollment and Resources

- Funding crunches for small schools
- Lack of funding for schools, impacting various aspects of schools
- Limitation in course offerings due to funding
- Funding challenges for events and extracurriculars
- Concerns about declining enrollment

2. Educational Options and Opportunities

- Lack of educational options in rural schools
- Challenges in accessing diverse courses
- High schools facing decreased enrollment, impacting the ability to offer a variety of courses and extracurricular activities
- Limited opportunities for advanced or specialty classes

3. Staffing Challenges

- Shortages of substitute teachers, educational assistants, and casual staff
- Trouble finding teachers for different subjects
- Overwhelmed and stressed teachers, EAs, and admin
- Need for more support staff in classrooms

Statements unique to stakeholder groups

Parents

- Parents expressed a need for more communication about student events

Staff

- Staffed Student disengagement and challenges in motivating students

Students

- Students expressed concern about behaviors and social issues demonstrated by classmates

Continue

What We Heard about What to Continue

“Continue to ask for parent input” Parent

“Continue to diversify option courses” Parent

“Focus on learning. Do the basics really well (literacy & numeracy), if & when that is completed, work collaboratively with the community to offer high quality "extras" (sports programs, different types of options classes, after school programs” Parent

“Staying connected with Lakeland College. Being progressive. Giving staff collaboration time and great PD time” Staff

“Continue inviting our community members into our schools and encourage them to take an active role. Continue developing inclusivity and appreciation for diversity. Continue to provide learning supports and wellness supports for student” Staff

“Have good learning environments, have study sessions, continue to support students with their work” Student

“Continue with mental health programs to help students, and to help students prepare for life after school.” Student

Themes of what to Continue at BTPS

1. Community Engagement and Collaboration

- Encourage engagement with the community
- Engage with partners to enrich education
- Promote rural schools and provide collaborative projects
- Include parents and build relationships in the community
- Continue Lakeland College opportunities

2. Focus on Literacy and Numeracy

- Prioritize literacy and numeracy skills from elementary through high school
- Allocate funds specifically for literacy and numeracy programs
- Build literacy and numeracy skills

3. Educational Focus and Improvement

- Focus on core learning in all grades
- Continue to diversify option courses

4. Student Support and Well-being

- Provide opportunities for students to feel heard
- Support students with different learning abilities and mental wellness
- Advocate for additional funding, especially for support staff, and mental health supports

Statements unique to stakeholder groups

Parents

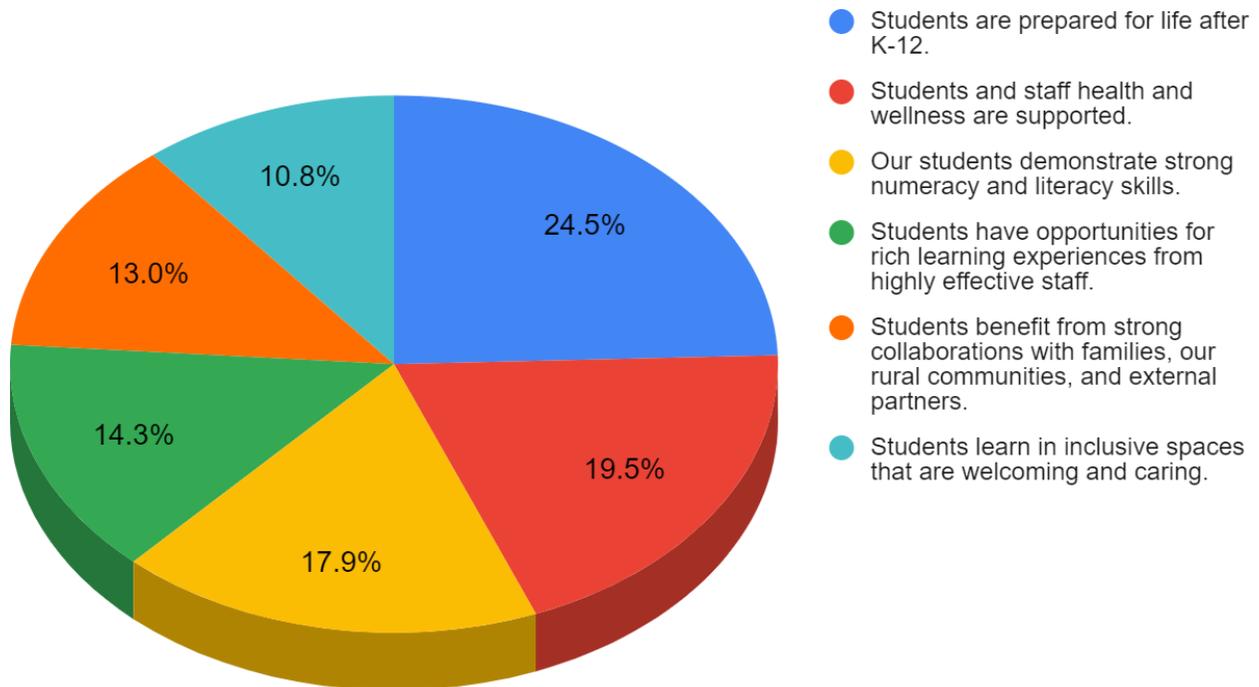
- Work with parents and let them be involved in their children's education engaging in active listening and building relationships with parent

Students

- Keep sports teams and afterschool activities

Outcome Focus Areas

Stakeholders were asked to identify two of the top outcomes that should be a focus in the coming school year.



The top three outcomes are:

1. Students are prepared for life after K-12.
2. Students and staff health and wellness are supported.
3. Our students demonstrate strong numeracy and literacy skills.

Annual Education Results Report 2022-2023

Priority One: Supporting Learning Success For All Students

Outcome: Students demonstrate strong numeracy and literacy skills.

- BTPS has allocated all grant dollars to support literacy and numeracy learning loss down to each school. This focus at the school level has helped address learning loss in a manner that best addresses school and student needs.
- Focusing on communicating the work of our schools to parents will highlight the quality of our education.

Outcome: Students are prepared for the life after K-12

- Last year was the full return of PATs and weighted Diploma exams.
- The results of parent measures are slowly starting to rise over last year.
- BTPS strengths in high levels of high school completion, low dropout rates, and performance on PATs are notable.
- Indigenous students performed better in BTPS than in other school districts throughout the province, however work will still be needed to close the gap with the division average.

Outcome: Students have opportunities for rich learning experiences from highly effective staff

- BTPS has initiated a robust feedback loop from staff on the professional development activities that it has provided.
- Professional learning has been responsive to the staff's desire to collaborate with colleagues.
- Staff had a diversity of learning opportunities at both the division level and school level.

Priority Two: Supporting Learning Success for All Student

Outcome: Students learn in inclusive spaces that are welcoming and caring

- BTPS continues to see positive results in the areas of welcoming environments and safe and caring.
- As increased levels of support for Speech-Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Physical Therapists and behavior consultants continue to be consistent year over year, students and schools will be better served.

Outcome: Students and staff health and wellness are supported.

- Students in grades 4 to 6 and 10 to 12 report the highest levels of emotional health and represent 5-year highs. Work needs to continue to support Grade 7 to 9 students.

Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations

Outcome: Students benefit from strong collaborations with families, our rural communities, and external partners.

- BTPS is focusing on parental engagement across the school division through clearer communication, community collaboration, and school councils.

Board-Student Engagements

Board-student engagements included over 100 students throughout the school year. Students join the Board of Trustees each month to provide feedback.

Priority One: Supporting Learning Success for All Students

- Students were welcomed back to school by engaged staff greeting them at the bus, designed welcoming activities, and various school spirit activities.
- Students are excited for clubs, sports activities, field trips and graduation.
- Students highlight the great school they are in, with many opportunities, mentoring activities, working with the elementary students from older grades, and how much they enjoy their school.
- Students highlighted many ways schools support their literacy and numeracy learning including learning games, buddy reading and writing time, math activities, and reading and writing development across all subject and grade areas.
- Students highlight the benefit of learning literacy and numeracy skills including, supporting their future learning and life, passing down their history and inspiration to our future.

Priority Two: Supporting Learning Success for All Student

- In supporting all diversity, students shared that teachers are patient, make them feel welcome, create learning on racism within the classroom and provide safe spaces for students.
- In highlighting the learning on Indigenous ways of knowing, students shared about learning at Blue Quills residential schools, guest speakers, National Day of Truth and Reconciliation and National Indigenous People Day.

Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations

- Students highlighted many opportunities to connect to their school community including: Christmas concert, dances, visits into the local community such as the fire hall, inviting the community into the school, using community facilities, and support from local businesses.
- Students share many aspects they enjoy about living in rural Alberta including: the safety and belonging felt in our communities, the freedom and openness, small class size and great connections with teachers and staff, and the close connection to classmates.

Year Two Focus Areas

Identified Focus for the Coming Year

In reviewing the responses from stakeholders, analyzing the AERR data and listening to student voice, the following focus areas have been identified. These are identified under each Education Plan Priority.

Priority One: Supporting Learning Success for All Students

1. Continue to work on literacy and numeracy
2. Support the programing choices, options and learning opportunities for students
3. Develop strong professional learning for staff

Priority Two: Supporting Learning Success for All Student

1. Continue to provide safe and welcoming environments
2. Focus support services on student needs and services
3. Support staff and student well-being

Priority Three: Building Strong Collaborations

1. Continue to build on the strengths of our rural communities
2. Increase engagement with parents and community
3. Communicate the partnerships and celebrate success of our schools